

Hawaii MARINE ON POINT

HAWAII MARINE B SECTION

FEBRUARY 4, 2005



Staff Sgt. Ronna M. Weyland



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Waimanalo residents Chantal Dunlap and son, Michael Dunlap, 6, read a prayer message left behind by another visitor to the Pacific War Memorial here Sunday. Hundreds of community residents visited the memorial to remember and pay tribute to the service members.



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The public was invited the Pacific War Memorial here, Sunday, to pay tribute to the 26 Marines and one Sailor killed in the CH-53E "Super Stallion" helicopter crash in Iraq, Jan. 26.



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Key Network Volunteers from 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Regina Jones (left) and Mary Holmes have a moment of silence after placing 27 roses at the base of the Pacific War Memorial here Sunday. Each rose represents each of the Marines and Sailor killed.

Gone, but not forgotten

Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson

Combat correspondent

An elderly woman sits very still and quiet on stone bench. Her look is somber; she just sits and gazes upon dozens of flowers, ribbons and pictures. She doesn't speak, but there are no words necessary for her for why she is there. Her American flag earrings; her patriotic hat; her necklace of bells with red, white and blue ribbon; and the look in her eyes says it all.

Sandra Nakasone, a 63-year-old travel associate, along with hundreds of other local citizens, came out Sunday afternoon to the Pacific War Memorial here to pay their respects to the ones who gave their lives in the tragic helicopter crash last week in Iraq.

The front gate of the base opened to the local community for approximately six hours on Sunday. Citizens and their families brought flowers, balloons, pictures and a vast array of messages for the ones lost.

"I was watching the news when I first heard about the crash," said Nakasone.

"I was truly devastated. I feel so sorry for all the families that are being left behind, and I'm so thankful for all of those brave men protecting us."

Bitter memories flowed into the minds of some of the community, as the thought of lost loved ones came back to them from past wars.

"Our brother was a gunnery sergeant in the Vietnam war," said Wilma Hokama and Linda Chang, sisters from Honolulu. "It's like a terrible flashback for us because he was shot down and killed in a helicopter, over there."

The sisters came on Sunday, laying a bundle of intertwined leaves and flowers in front of the memorial. They stood in silence for those lost and for their brother as well, said Hokama.

"We know what the families who've lost are going through right now," said Hokama. "Our brother was so proud to be a Marine. He was on his second tour over there and he died with his best friend."

Some of those who attended knew the dead, personally. Others came to show their support and gratefulness.

Still others came to show respect while wishing for a safe return for their loved ones.

"My husband is over there with First Battalion, Third Marine Regiment right now," said Deanna Petersen, whose husband is a machinegunner in Alpha Co. "I haven't heard from him since the whole incident happened. I was so heartbroken and scared when I first heard about it."

Petersen said that the men over there are giving their lives, and she can't thank them enough for keeping her husband safe.

"I want to say that I am not only thankful for them protecting our country, but for always watching over my husband's shoulder as well," said Petersen. "

Mitchell Chang, husband to Linda, also attended the memorial with the two sisters.

"I was in the Air Force for eight years when I was young, so you feel that bond with all military," said Chang. "There is one thing that I do know though, the Marines will finish the job."

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— Sandra Nakasone



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A message on a baby photo left at the Pacific War Memorial read "Daddy, I will always be dreaming of you. I love you. Love, Baby Boy James Cash House." This memento is especially poignant because several of the service members left behind babies who were born after they left on 1/3's tour to Iraq.



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Many from the local community came to the Pacific War Memorial, throughout the day, to pay their respects to the service members who lost their lives last week in Iraq.



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Far right — Sandra Nakasone, 63, whose father served in World War II and brother served in Vietnam, sits in contemplation after paying her respects to the 27 service members lost last week in Iraq.

Right — Members of the Key Volunteer Network placed 27 roses, one for each service member lost Jan. 26 in Iraq, at the Pacific War Memorial here, Sunday.